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By Congressman Charles F. Bass (NH-02)
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This week, as a member of the House Subcommittee on Communications and Technology, I participated in an alarming hearing on international proposals to regulate the Internet. While the importance of Internet freedom is unquestioned in our nation's democracy, it is not a universal value. Make no mistake, dictatorial regimes and cash-strapped nation-states around the world view the Internet as both a threat to their power and political stability, as well as an opportunity to redistribute international wealth.

This December, representatives of 193 nations from across the globe will convene at the United Nation's (UN) International Telecommunications Union (ITU) conference to consider proposals to expand the UN's jurisdiction over the Internet. Broadband access remains a challenge at both the local and global level; however, this week's House hearing revealed bipartisan and unanimous agreement that the Internet, which has thrived on a multi-stakeholder – rather than top-down governance – model, should not be subjected to the control of a new international bureaucracy.

The Internet is an unparalleled platform for the democratic exchange of ideas and economic growth. Its decentralized architecture and universality mean that users located anywhere, speaking in any language and using any software, can connect to the World Wide Web without needing the permission of a centralized authority.

These attributes have given rise to dramatic democratic revolutions around the world, including last year's Arab Spring, as well as tremendous innovation and economic growth. It is estimated that by 2016, the average speed of mobile broadband will quadruple and more than 45 percent of the world's population will be connected to the Internet. Over the past five years, among mature economies, the Internet has accounted for over 20 percent of the growth of gross domestic product. In New Hampshire, consumers and businesses of all sizes benefit from the nearly \$8 trillion in e-commerce generated each year.

Given the dynamic nature of the Internet, it is essential that its freedoms and fundamental functions are not subject to bureaucratic or centralized control. The ITU, which was originally formed in 1865 to regulate the telegraph and which currently provides input on the settlement rates of international voice telephony calls, is not institutionally capable of keeping up with the pace of technological innovation.

Moreover, as a matter of foreign policy and in the interest of our own national sovereignty, the United States should not acquiesce to proposals from nations like China, Russia, and Iran that would consolidate governance of the Internet under the guise of an "international Code of Conduct for Information Security." This is a framework for dissident censorship, individual surveillance, and the taxation of Internet traffic that we should fundamentally reject.

That's why I am pleased that I was able to join a bipartisan group of my colleagues on this issue

as a cosponsor of H.Con.Res. 127, which clearly articulates the consistent and unequivocal policy of the United States to promote a global Internet, free from government control, and to preserve and advance the successful multi-stakeholder model that governs the Internet today. Working together, we will be able to keep the Internet dynamic, secure, and free.

Charles F. Bass represents New Hampshire's Second District in Congress and serves on the Subcommittee on Communications and Technology.